ANCIENT SKIES

"Come Search With Us!"

Official Logbook of the Ancient Astronaut Society

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CHANQUILLO

BY GENE M. PHILLIPS, Founder of the Society

We missed seeing the "Great Wall of Peru" because our guide couldn't find it. Although it is shown on some maps and the Tourist Guide to Peru tells exactly where it is supposed to be (1), our tour guide was from Lima and unacquainted with the Trujillo region. Our Member Expedition to Peru had flown from Lima to Trujillo and our guide met us there with our tour bus from Lima, which is some 545 km (339 Miles) south of Trujillo.

We had visited Chan-Chan, the immense adobe capital of the Chimor Empire (Chimu people), which is hard by the Pacific Ocean just on the outskirts of Trujillo. The Chimu were defeated by the Incas in the latter half of the 15 Century AD. The largest pre-Columbian city in South America, Chan-Chan covers an area of 14 1/2 sq.km (9 sq. miles)(2).

We then climbed the Huaca del Sol, a huge Mochica (4th to 8th Centuries AD) construction just south of Trujillo near the Moche River. Only when one is on the structure is it apparent that what appeared to be a huge, yellow dirt mountain is actually constructed of adobe bricks - over 50 million of them! The Huaca (ancient Indian burial mound) is over 48m (160 ft) high and originally was 365m (1200 ft) long and 135m (435 ft) wide. Human skeletal remains and Mochica ceramics can still be found nearby.

It was after visiting the Huaca del Sol that we continued southward in search of the "Great Wall of Peru." We knew from our research that the 50 km (31 miles)long stone wall was supposed to be in the River Santa area, stretching from Tambo Real near the mouth of the river, eastward to Suchimancillo. You would think that a structure of such magnitude could not be "lost" and that the locals could point us in the right direction. Some attempted to, but whenever we headed "thataway", we came to a dead end. After several attempts our bus stopped in a desolate area and our guide pointed into the distance. "Over there," he said. "What?" "The Wall." "I don't see any wall."

"Well," he said, "we can't go any closer, our bus is too big."

We gave up and went into town for a late lunch. A wizened, old Indian was lounging on the sidewalk in front of the restaurant and our guide asked him if he knew where the Great Wall was. Oh sure, he knew exactly where it was. But he informed us that our large tour bus could not negotiate the tortuous road. If we wanted to rent a Jeep, he could take us to the Wall. We would have needed four Jeeps for our group, and besides, it was mid-afternoon and we were tired, thirsty and hungry, so we passed up our last chance to visit the "Great Wall of Peru."

The next morning we drove into the Sechin River Valley for a look at the strange, weird monoliths

Fig. 1. Aerial view of Chanquillo, from Dr. Federico Kauffmann's Manual de Arqueologia Peruana, p. 262. Note the protected entrances, five inside the outer ring and four inside the inner ring. National Geographic has a similar photo on p.765 of the December 1973 issue, with a brief caption which fails to give the name of the site and refers to it as a "mysterious seal stamped on the landscape of Peru's central coast...." National Geographic has erred here. The design is not "stamped" on the landscape. It is a large structure of intricately designed stone walls, not a "marking" on the desert like the designs on the Plain of Nazca, 800 km (500 miles) to the south.

carved in relief, depicting gruesome personages, and parts thereof - the Chavin-style characters from the first millennium BC. We concluded that the Sechin people had been a bloodthirsty bunch and we were glad to get out of there.

Next stop, Chanquillo - we hoped. Chanquillo is not on the maps of Peru and it is mentioned in only a few sources, although none of them attempt a definition of the word.(3) According to the Tourist Guide to Peru,the "castle" of Chanquillo (whose age is unknown but is probably pre-Mochica - before the 4th Century AD) is located 20 km (12 1/2 miles) up the Casma River Valley.(4) Bear in mind that when we refer to "river valleys", we don't mean "rivers" with water;we mean "river valleys" where water once flowed, or sometime might flow again. These "river valleys" are seco; dry, arid, sandy courses.

The Peruvian archaeologist, Dr.Federico Kauffmann Doig, states that Chanquillo is considered to be a fortress, and is assumed to belong to the Formative Period, which starts at 1000 BC.(5)

We drove southward past the Casma until our bus finally slowed and pulled over to the side where a

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truck was parked.Our driver engaged the truck driver in conversation and we could soon determine that we had come too far. The truck driver was pointing back in the direction from whence we had just come. After the usual "muchas gracias," our driver maneuvered the huge bus in a U-turn in the middle of the two lane highway and we headed back north. Our guide informed us that just a short distance ahead there should be a turn-off to Chanquillo, and that we should all look for it. We had not seen any directional signs on the way down however (there were none), so we all began to scan both sides of the road looking for the side road, hopefully with a directional arrow pointing towards "Chanquillo."

Our guide said that the turn-off was supposed to be marked with two stakes in the ground, one on each side of the exit road. We spied the two stakes before our driver did and he overshot the exit, so again we made a U-turn in the middle of the road and went back to the markers. There was no road, just a turn-off onto the desert. Our driver inched the big luxury tour bus off the highway and onto the sand, feeling his way gingerly as he proceeded. Not bad - the sand was hard-packed and the driving was easy, for about a mile. Then the driver stopped the bus and turned off the ignition. We got out but could see nothing ahead except sand, so we asked the driver to continue, but he refused, saying that the sand was too soft.

We began to walk, only to find that after a few yards the sand was hard-packed again. We went back to the bus to urge the driver to continue, but he just smiled and shook his head.

Our guide (now an expert in finding lost sites) pointed into the distance and said, "Just over that rise - Chanquillo!"

Although late winter, the September sun was warm. The sand sparkled in the brilliant sun, like glistening snow. As we trudged forward, visions of "the Great Wall" shimmered in our minds. Would we come away empty-handed again? But as we topped the rise we saw our goal about a half mile in the distance - the Fortress of Chanquillo! See Fig. 2.

As our pace quickened we thought of the opening scenes of the movie "Beau Geste", in which the patrol cautiously approached Fort Zinderneuf in silence. It would not have surprised us to hear a shot ring out, but no such thing occurred.

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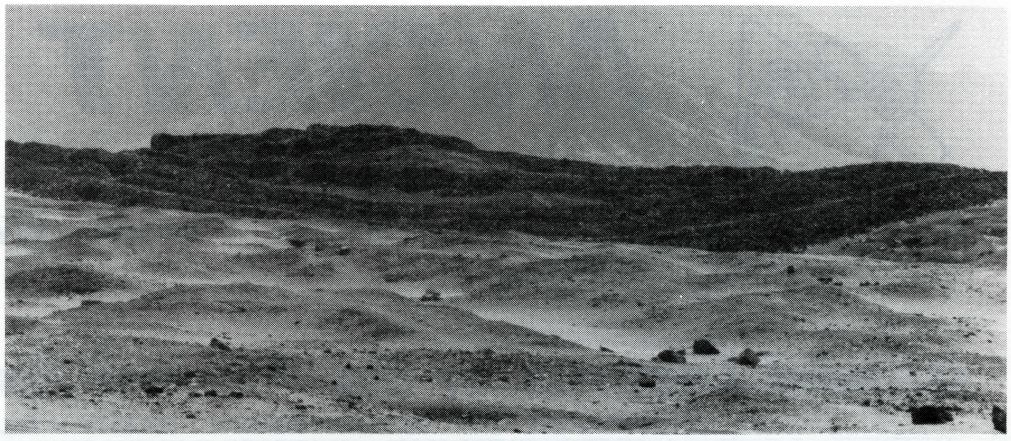

Fig. 2. First ground view of Chanquillo from a distance.

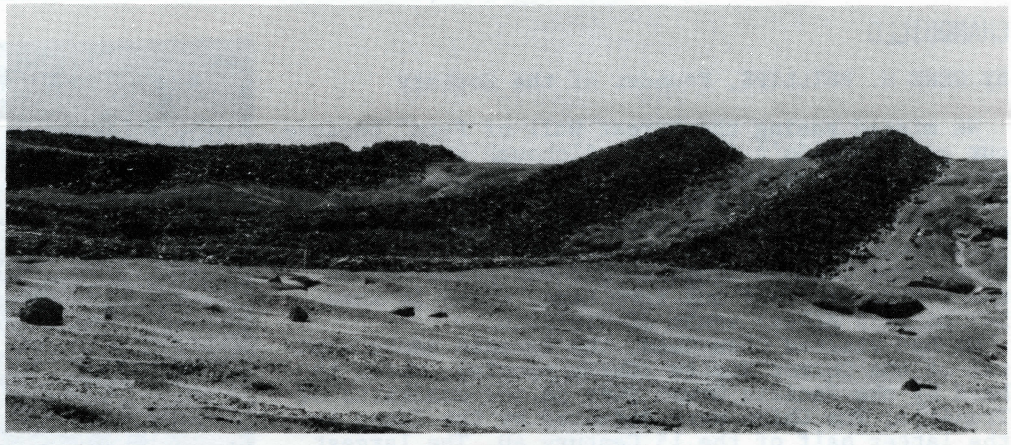

Fig. 3. A portion of the two concentric outer walls.

Fig. 4. The two circular formations inside the oval.

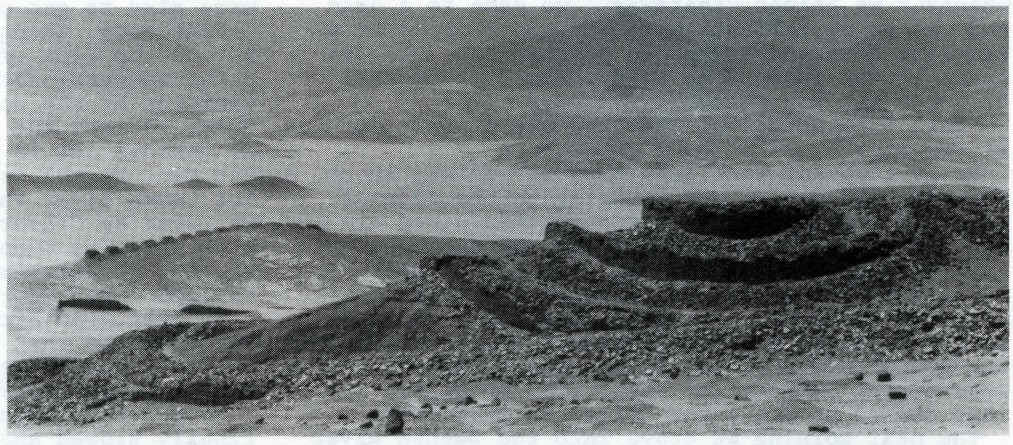

Fig. 5. View of one circular formation inside oval; wall in distance.

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We found an opening in the outer wall and entered to find the entire structure completely abandoned, with no evidence of recent habitation.

Chanquillo is truly a mystery. No one knows who built it, or when, or the origin of its name, nor its purpose,although it supposedly was used as a defensive structure. Its configuration is odd indeed.Situated in the midst of a barren desert, Chanquillo is not visible from the highway, so it is rarely visited.In fact, we were the only people at the site and we saw no evidence that anyone had been near the place in a long time. There were none of the usual pop and beer cans, empty cigarette packages and other trash, that is, no evidence of civilization usually found at archaeological sites in Central and South America.

There were no signs, no caretaker, no cantina to offer cold drinks and souvenirs, and no entrance fee.

The rare visitor to Chanquillo has free rein to roam throughout the complex, climb the walls, take photographs, fall off a cliff, whatever. One can only stare in awe and wonder at this perplexing configuration of walls, now in ruins. The striking aspect of Chanquillo is that the masonry walls have all deteriorated in exactly the same fashion throughout the site. The top courses of stones have fallen, almost equally on each side of the walls, so that there are linear piles of stones along the lower portion of the walls evenly on both sides. Based upon the amount of stones which have fallen, we estimated the original height of the walls at about 4 to 5 m (about 12 to 15 ft).From a distance it appears that the design of the complex is formed with lines of loose stones, but up close it can be seen that about one-half of the height of the walls remains,with the loose stones alongside them. It is strange that the stones did not all fall on the same side of the wall, which would be the case with high winds, for example. But apparently it was not a sudden catastrophe which hit the site, but rather a slow process of deterioration gradually occurred over a long period of time to bring about its ruin. Also, most of the original stones appear to be still at the site and have not been removed by the local inhabitants for use in their later constructions, as has happened at so many ancient archaeological sites around the world.

Situated at the edge of a bluff overlooking the Casma Valley, the layout of the complex is most(Continued on next page)

Fig. 6 above and Fig. 7 below. Closer view of one of the circular formations inside the oval.

Fig. 8. Walking the outer ring. View from atop the outer wall showing space between the two outer walls.

All photographs used in this article, except Fig. 1, were taken by the author.

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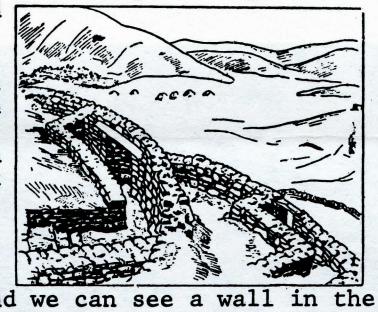
unusual. See Fig. 1. There are two outer concentric stone walls, roughly circular, then inside the enclosure formed by the innermost wall there is another wall on higher ground which is oval or egg-shaped. Inside the oval are three distinct sections, two circular and one rectangular. The latter area, which is a walled enclosure itself, is set into the "fat" portion of the oval and the two circular insets are in a line beneath the rectangle, with the center one situated at the highest point of the complex, which is almost in the exact center of the fortress. Each of the two circular sections contains two concentric circular walls and a round stone platform inside the inner small circle. The first thing I thought of when I saw an aerial photograph of the site in National Geographic(6) was the cutting head of a Norelco electric shaver!

Unfortunately we did not take any exact measurements of Chanquillo, because we assumed that since it was an archeological site it had already been thoroughly measured, mapped and described in the scientific literature. Not so. There is a paucity of facts about Chanquillo; therefore we will give our best estimate of the dimensions, although the relative distances between portions of the complex are pretty accurate.

We estimate the diameter of the outer circle to be about 185 m (600 ft) and that the open space between the two outer rings is about 10 m (32 ft). The open space between the innermost outer ring and the oval is about 20 m (65 ft) and the width of the oval at its longest dimension is about 122 m (400 ft). The width of each of the walls of the two outer rings is about 2 m (6 1/2 ft). The highest point inside the fortress is about 16 m (50 ft) up from the desert floor.

The outermost wall contains five entrances and the inner ring contains four, all equally spaced around the walls. Each entrance is protected by a unique layout of a short wall parallel to the ring immediately inside the doorway. The inside wall forms a passageway which is closed on the right side, so that the visitor must turn left 90 degrees after passing through the doorway, proceed through the passageway a short distance, then turn right 90 degrees and go up a few steps to the open space inside the ring. The same procedure must be followed after entering the second ring. At right is a sketch of the protected entryways from Dr. Kauffmann's Manual at p.262.



Standing at the highest point in the complex, the entire panorama of the surrounding landscape can be viewed, with the desert floor on one side, the dry Casma valley on the opposite side below the bluff and the barren hills in the distance. And we can see a wall in the distance, not the Great Wall of Peru, but a wall nevertheless, which starts a short distance from the fortress and continues into the distance for about 3 1/4 km (2 miles). The wall is of stone and about 2 m (6 1/2 ft) high.

From this vantage point there is a feeling of loneliness, a stillness and lifelessness which pervades the bleak desolation all around. It is difficult to imagine that once this valley thrived; that there was a real river below the bluff which brought forth lush vegetation to sustain a large population of people who could not live in peace with their war-like neighbors from the north and who found it necessary to protect themselves with this uniquely designed fortification.

Or are we missing something? Is there a hidden meaning to the design of Chanquillo? Could it be that this strange configuration, the shape of which can be discerned only from above, was deliberately placed at this precise location as a sign, or a message, which visitors arriving to Earth from another world would readily recognize? If so, can we decipher the message?

References:

(1) G. de Reparaz Ruiz, Ediciones de Arte Rep, Lima, Peru, pp. 179-180.
(2) National Geographic Magazine, March 1973.
(3) (a) National Geographic Magazine, Dec. 1973.
(b) Tourist Guide to Peru.
(c) Manual de Arqueologia Peruana, Federico Kauffmann Doig (5th Ed.1973) Ediciones Peisa, Lima, Peru (Spanish).
(4) p. 177.
(5) Manual de Arqueologia Peruana, p. 262.
(6) December, 1973, p. 765.

US$23 MILLION SPACE TOILET!

In a Reuters dispatch from Cape Canaveral, Florida printed in the Chicago Tribune on January 15, 1993, it was reported that NASA spent US$23 million for the toilet for the space shuttle Endeavor. According to the article, the toilet "uses fans and air flow to carry away waste in the absence of gravity."

In September, 1987, the Russian (then Soviet) Cosmonaut Georgy M. Grechko addressed the Ancient Astronaut Society's World Conference in Novi Vinodolski, Yugoslavia (now Croatia). Grechko, a PhD in physics and mathematics, spent 96 days in space. When asked how they disposed of human waste during his stay in the space station, Cosmonaut Grechko replied, "We just put it in a plastic bag and threw it over the side." He explained, "It burns up in the Earth's atmosphere." The moral of the story is, if you don't have 23 million dollars to spend, you make-do with what you have.

20th ANNIVERSARY WORLD CONFERENCE, IMPERIAL PALACE HOTEL, LAS VEGAS, NEVADA, August 1-5, 1993.

Only persons registering for our Conference will be entitled to the special hotel room rate at the Imperial Palace of US$45 per night, plus tax, single or double. Extra persons occupying the room, that is, more than two, will be charged an additional US$12 each per night, plus tax. Persons registering for the Conference will be sent a Special Room Reservation Form. The Conference Registration Fee is US$150 per person for all events. Please note that all Conference lectures will be in English; there will be no translation services.

UP-COMING UFO CONFERENCES

April 2-4, 1993. Fifth Annual Ozark UFO Conference, at the Inn of the Ozarks, Eureka Springs, Arkansas. Info: call (501) 354-2558.

July 2,3,4, 1993. MUFON 1993 International UFO Symposium, Hyatt Richmond Hotel, Richmond, Virginia. Info: Mark E. Blashak, P.O.Box 207, Manakin-Sabot, VA 23103.

October 9-10, 1993. John White's The UFO Experience Conference, Holiday Inn, North Haven, Connecticut. Info: John W. White, 60 Pound Ridge Rd., Cheshire, CT 06410.

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